

American Battle Monuments Commission

Florence American Cemetery and Memorial

LOCATION

The Florence American Cemetery is situated approximately 7.5 miles (12 kilometers) south of Florence, Italy, on the west side of the Via Cassia, a main highway connecting Florence with Siena and Rome. The Certosa-Florence exit of the Rome-Milan autoroute is two miles south of the cemetery.

Train service to Florence from the principal cities of Italy and Europe is excellent. Bus and taxi service is available from the railroad station to the cemetery. A “SITA” bus stop is conveniently located just outside the cemetery entrance.

Hotel accommodations in Florence are ample.

HOURS

The cemetery is open daily to the public from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm except December 25 and January 1. It is open on host country holidays. When the cemetery is open to the public, a staff member is on duty in the Visitors’ Building to answer questions and escort relatives to grave and memorial sites.

HISTORY

Following the capture of Rome on 4 June 1944, the Allies pursued the enemy northward toward the Po River and the Alps. For the first time since the Allies landed at Salerno in September 1943, the enemy was in full retreat.

Through June and the first half of July, Allied forces advanced rapidly northward from Rome. Pursuit was energetic even though many Allied troops were being withdrawn in preparation for the attack in southern France. Leghorn fell to U.S. troops of the U.S. Fifth Army on 18 July 1944. Five days later they entered Pisa. Florence fell to British troops of the U.S. Fifth Army on 4 August 1944. By then, the Allied had crossed the Arno and reached the outposts of the Gothic Line, the last enemy defensive system in Italy. There they paused to reorganize and resupply before continuing their offensive.

On 25 August, the British Eighth Army attacked on the eastern half of the Gothic Line, driving into the mountains. Several days later, the U.S. Fifth Army penetrated the Gothic Line on the west as a prelude to outflanking and occupying the strong defenses of the Futa Pass. Continuing its advance, the British Eighth Army crossed several strong defended rivers and entered Rimini on 21 September 1944.

In October 1944, a final bid to capture Bologna brought the U.S. Fifth Army to within nine miles of that city. There with the Po Valley in sight, the U.S. Fifth Army and

the British Eighth Army were forced by harsh weather conditions and shortages of personnel and supplies to halt for the winter.

Preceded by massive air and artillery bombardment, the British Eighth Army resumed the offensive northward on 9 April 1945. Five days later the U.S. Fifth Army joined the attack, supported by the heaviest air assault yet employed in Italy. Although the offensive met still opposition, within one week U.S. troops had driven into the Po Valley and were converging on Bologna from the south and west, while at the same time the British Eighth Army was converging on it from the east. The city fell to the U.S. Fifth Army on 21 April 1945. With the establishment of a bridgehead across the Po River on 23 April 1945, the fleeing enemy forces were pursued rapidly northward.

The final week of the war saw wide advances throughout northern Italy. While infantry and mountain troops of the U.S. Fifth Army drove into the foothills of the Alps, its armored columns and motorized infantry raced up the Po Valley, reaching Milan on 29 April 1945. During this time, the British Eighth Army swept northeast along the Adriatic coastal plain to liberate Padua and Venice.

After seizing Genoa, U.S. forces drove westward to make contact with the French as resistance began to collapse everywhere. On 2 May 1945, the enemy troops in northern Italy surrendered.

SITE

The Florence American Cemetery, 70 acres in extent, is one of fourteen permanent American World War II military cemetery memorials erected on foreign soil by the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The site was liberated on 3 August 1944 by the South African 6th Armored Division, and later became part of the zone of the U.S. Fifth Army. It is located astride the Greve River, and is framed by wooded hills, which rise several hundred feet to the west. The site was selected as a permanent cemetery after a survey of temporary cemeteries established in northern Italy during World War II revealed that there was at least one major objection in every instance to retention of any of the temporary sites as a permanent cemetery.

The 4,402 servicemen and women interred in the cemetery represent 39 percent of the temporary burials originally made between Rome and the Alps. Most died in the fighting which occurred after the capture of Rome in June 1944. Included among them are casualties of the heavy fighting in the Apennines shortly before the war's end.

ARCHITECTS

Architects for the cemetery and its memorial were McKim, Mead and White of New York. The landscape architects were Clarke and Rapuano, also of New York.

GENERAL LAYOUT

The two entrances to the cemetery are located about 250 meters apart on the Via Cassia. Connecting them is a crescent-shaped drive within the cemetery which leads to parking

areas on the east or near bank of the Greve River, the cemetery office, the visitors' building and a small bridge. The office and visitors' building face each other at the near end of the bridge.

On the west bank of the Greve River are the graves area, the memorial, the service area and the superintendent's quarters. A wide east-west mall of fine grass separates the graves area into two parts. Overlooking it from high ground at the west end of the mall is the memorial; a large flagpole overlooks it from the east end.

Construction of the cemetery and memorial was completed in 1959.

THE MEMORIAL

The memorial consists of two open atria or courts, a connecting wall on which are affixed tablets with the names of the Missing in the region, a chapel and a stele or pylon surmounted by a sculptured figure representing the spirit of peace. The wall and chapel are on the topmost of three broad terraces overlooking the cemetery. The base of the stele is on the lower terrace.

The south atrium serves as a forecourt to the chapel. Like its counterpart on the north, it has a rectangular pool and jet in its center and it is faced with Roman travertine. The inner recessed walls of the atria are panelled in Baveno granite from quarries at the north end of Lake Como.

Each recessed inner wall panel of the south atrium bears an inscription. Reading clockwise from its southeast corner, the inscriptions are as follows:

Panel No. 1

THEY FACED THE FOE AS THEY DREW NEAR HIM
IN THE STRETCH OF THEIR OWN MANHOOD
AND WHEN THE SHOCK OF BATTLE CAME
THEY IN A MOMENT OF TIME
AT THE CLIMAX OF THEIR LIVES
WERE RAPT AWAY FROM A WORLD
FILLED FOR THEIR DYING EYES
NOT WITH TERROR BUT WITH GLORY

Panel No. 2

... SUCH WERE THE MEN WHO LIE HERE
THEY RECEIVED EACH FOR HIS OWN MEMORY
PRAISE THAT WILL NEVER DIE
AND WITH IT THE GRANDEST OF ALL SEPULCHRES
A HOME IN THE MINDS OF MEN

Panel No. 3

THEREFORE DO NOT MOURN WITH THE PARENTS OF THE DEAD
WHO ARE HERE WITH US RATHER COMFORT THEM

LET THEIR BURDEN BE LIGHTENED BY THE GLORY OF THE DEAD
THE LOVE OF HONOR ALONE IS NOT STALED BY AGE
AND IT IS BY HONOR THAT THE END OF LIFE IS CHEERED

(These three texts are from A. E. Zimmern's translation of Pericles' *Praise of the Dead* as recorded by Thucydides.)

Panel No. 4 (*to the left of the Chapel door*)

O LORD SUPPORT US ALL THE DAY LONG
UNTIL THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN AND THE EVENING COMES
AND THE FEVER OF LIFE IS OVER AND OUR WORK IS DONE
THEN IN THY MERCY GRANT US A SAFE LODGING
AND A HOLY REST AND PEACE AT THE LAST

(This is taken from Cardinal Newman's *Sermon XX* and is included in the Episcopal Prayer book.)

Panel No. 5 (*to the right of the Chapel door*)

O GOD WHO ART THE AUTHOR OF PEACE
AND LOVER OF CONCORD
DEFEND US THY HUMBLE SERVANTS
IN ALL ASSAULTS OF OUR ENEMIES
THAT WE SURELY TRUSTING IN THY DEFENSE
MAY NOT FEAR THE POWER OF ANY ADVERSARIES

(This also is from the Episcopal Prayer book.)

Panel No. 6 (*on the north wall, nearest to the Tablets of the Missing*)

THEIR BODIES ARE BURIED IN PEACE
THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE

(From Ecclesiastes 44)

Surmounting each of panels 1,3,4,5 and 6 are three granite roundels in which have been carved different military insignia. Appearing clockwise from the southeast corner of the atrium are: Armor, Gunner's Mate, Aerial Gunner; Coast Artillery Corps, Boatswain's Mate, Army Air Corps; Corps of Engineers, Infantry, Christian Chaplain; Jewish Chaplain, Field Artillery, Medical Corps; and Signal Corps, Machinist's Mate and Aerial Bombardier.

A carved figure representing "The Spirit of American Youth" appears above the chapel door, while one representing an American eagle appears above panel No. 2, the center south panel. Both figures were designed by Sidney Waugh.

The bronze doors to the chapel were fabricated by the Fonderia Marinelli of Florence. From the doorway, the altar of Belgian black marble, with its bronze counterments, can be seen at the opposite end of the chapel. Behind the altar is a mosaic, 32 feet high and 24 feet wide, designed by Barry Faulkner of New York and executed by Fabrizio Cassio of Rome. The mosaic depicts Remembrance standing on a cloud, holding in her arms the lilies of Resurrection. The figure is contemplating a crocus-strewn field of marble headstones set among trees showing the first buds of spring – symbolizing new life. At the feet of Remembrance a helmet rests on a sword. The mosaic is illuminated by a skylight.

The chapel walls and the two columns flanking the altar are of polished Rosso Collemendino marble from Versiglia, Italy. The floor is paved with Verde Serpentino marble from Sondrio, Italy; the pews are of walnut.

The north atrium is similar in general design to the south atrium. Set into its west wall are two military operations maps recalling the achievements of the American forces in the region. They were designed by Bruno Bearzi of Florence, Italy from data furnished by the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The larger of the maps pictures Northern Italy and portrays military operations to the end of the war from the vicinity of the cemetery northward. The military operations as well as the general topography of the area are depicted in a mosaic of colored marbles known as intarsia, an art form for which the Florence region is famous. The map is embellished in its upper left-hand corner by twelve shields in four rows of three, each bearing the shoulder insignia of American ground and air units which participated in the fighting in Northern Italy. From left to right, these are: Fifth Army, Twelfth Air Force, Fifteen Air Force; II Corps, IV Corps, 1st Armored Division; 10th Mountain Division, 34th Infantry Division, 85th Infantry Division; and 88th Infantry Division, 91st Infantry Division and 92nd Infantry Division.

The smaller map is an insert into the larger map just below the shields. It illustrates the broad outline of military operations which took place in Sicily and Italy beginning in July 1943. The map was executed in scagliola by Emilio Martelli of Florence, Italy, a process consisting of drawings in colored artificial compositions which are inlaid in marble and glazed.

A stone planter runs the length of the wall at the foot of the maps. In front of the planter is a low bronze railing with regularly spaced bronze uprights.

The Baveno granite panels on the side walls of the atrium are inscribed with texts in English and Italian explaining the maps. The English and Italian inscriptions on the short side wall immediately to the left of the maps apply to the insert map and read in English as follows:

ON 10 JULY 1943, AMERICAN AND BRITISH FORCES, COVERED BY GUNFIRE OF THE WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE AND AIRCRAFT OF THE TWELFTH AIR FORCE, LANDED ON THE SHORES OF SICILY. THE U.S. SEVENTH ARMY ADVANCED RAPIDLY OVER THE WEST AND NORTH OF THE ISLAND, WITH THE BRITISH EIGHTH ARMY ON ITS RIGHT. THIS SWIFT CAMPAIGN LIBERATED THE ISLAND IN 39 DAYS.

ON 9 SEPTEMBER, UNDER COVER OF NAVAL AND AIR BOMBARDMENT, THE U.S. FIFTH ARMY LANDED NEAR SALERNO.

FIGHTING ITS WAY INLAND IT JOINED THE EIGHTH ARMY WHICH HAD
CROSSED THE STRAITS OF MESSINA. BY 1 OCTOBER, NAPLES AND THE
AIRFIELDS NEAR FOGGIA HAD BEEN SEIZED; FROM THE LATTER THE U.S.
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE LAUNCHED ITS STRATEGIC ATTACKS ON AUSTRIA,
THE BALKANS AND GERMANY.

AGAINST DETERMINED OPPOSITION, THE FIFTH AND EIGHTH ARMIES
DROVE NORTHWARD. TO ASSIST THE ADVANCE, ALLIED TROOPS ON 22
JANUARY 1944 LANDED IN THE ANZIO REGION BUT THE ENEMY'S PROMPT
REACTION PREVENTED EXPLOITATION OF THIS BEACHHEAD. ON 11 MAY
THE TWO ARMIES LAUNCHED A GENERAL ATTACK; THE FIFTH ARMY
AIDED BY THE TWELFTH AIR FORCE BREACHED THE ENEMY DEFENSES IN
THE MOUNTAINS NORTH OF GAETA. THE TROOPS IN THE BEACHHEAD
JOINED THE ATTACK AND ON 4 JUNE TH FIFTH ARMY ENTERED ROME.

The English and Italian inscriptions on the left and right panels of the north wall,
respectively, apply to the large map of northern Italy and read in English as follows:

FOLLOWING THE LIBERATION OF ROME, THE ALLIES MAINTAINED THEIR
PURSUIT OF THE ENEMY. BY 18 JULY 1944, THE U.S. FIFTH ARMY HAD
ADVANCED 150 MILES UP THE WEST COAST AND HAD LIBERATED
LEGHORN. IN CENTRAL ITALY AND ALONG THE ADRIATIC THE BRITISH
EIGHTH ARMY HAD PARALLELED THIS ADVANCE. AFTER PAUSING TO
REORGANIZE, THE FIFTH ARMY CROSSED THE ARNO AND PURSUED THE
RETREATING ENEMY INTO THE MOUNTAINS TO THE OUTPOSTS OF THE
GOTHIC LINE.

AFTER DIFFICULT FIGHTING THE FIFTH ARMY CUT THROUGH THIS
STRONG DEFENSE SYSTEM TO REACH FIRENZUOLA AND THE SANTERNO
VALLEY ON 21 SEPTEMBER. THE SAME DAY, BRITISH TROOPS HAVING
FORCED SUCCESSIVE DEFENDED RIVER LINES, ENTERED RIMINI. THE U.S.
TWELFTH AIR FORCE AND THE DESERT AIR FORCE MATERIALLY
CONTRIBUTED TO THESE ADVANCES BY THEIR CLOSE SUPPORT AND
THEIR CONTINUOUS ATTACKS AGAINST REAR AREAS. THE ADVANCE TO
THE SANTERNO VALLEY HAD OUTFLANKED THE STRONG DEFENSES OF
FUTA PASS, WHICH WAS OCCUPIED ON 22 SEPTEMBER BY AMERICAN
FORCES. DURING OCTOBER, THE ALLIED ADVANCES CONTINUED AT A
SLOWER PACE AGAINST STIFFENED RESISTANCE. BY THE END OF THE
MONTH, HAMPERED BY BAD WEATHER AND MUD, SHORTAGES OF
PERSONNEL AND DIFFICULTIES OF SUPPLY, THE FIFTH ARMY, NOW ONLY
NINE MILES SHORT OF BOLOGNA AND WITHIN SIGHT OF THE PO VALLEY,
PREPARED FOR ITS SECOND WINTER IN ITALY.

EARLY IN APRIL 1945, GAINS ALONG BOTH COASTS MARKED THE END
OF THE WINTER HALT. AFTER A WEEK OF HEAVY FIGHTING OUR TROOPS
BROKE INTO THE PO VALLEY. PRECEDED BY BOMBER AND FIGHTER
AIRCRAFT WHICH HARASSED THE FLEEING ENEMY, THE ALLIED
ADVANCED CONTINUED UNCHECKED ACROSS THE PO, THEN SPREAD OUT

TO THE NORTH, EAST AND WEST TO CLOSE THE FRONTIERS. ON 2 MAY 1945, THE ENEMY IN ITALY SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY.

The central panel of the north wall is engraved with this extract from General Eisenhower's "Crusade in Europe":

FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION
IS OURS ONLY IN THE MEASURE THAT MEN
WHO VALUE SUCH FREEDOM ARE READY
TO SUSTAIN ITS POSSESSION, TO DEFEND IT
AGAINST EVERY THRUST FROM WITHIN OR WITHOUT

Below the inscriptions on the north wall are six key maps recording the development of the war against Germany and the war against Japan.

Along the frieze above the inscriptions are nine escutcheons of Baveno granite on which are embossed the names of these ground and air battles in which American forces participated: Gela-Palermo-Troina; Salerno-Altavilla-Volturno; Magnano-San Pietro-Rapido; Cassino-Anzio-Cisterna; Rome-Leghorn-Arno; Futa-Santerno-Radicosa; Serchio-Bologna-Po Valley; Ploesti-Vienna-Munich; Regensburg-Budapest-Brenner.

The Tablets of the Missing, which connect the north and south atria are constructed of travertine stone and measure 17'6" in height and 138' in length. Shaded by plane trees, the Baveno granite panels on the Tablets are inscribed with the names and particulars of 1,409 Missing in Action in the region or lost or buried at sea. They came from Canada, the District of Columbia and from every state of the Union except Alaska and Hawaii.

United States Army and Army Air Forces ¹	1,379
United States Navy	12

¹During World War II the Air Forces were part of the Army

Without confirmed information to the contrary, a War Department Administrative Review Board established the official date of death of those commemorated on the Tablets of the Missing as one year and a day from the date on which the individual was placed in Missing in Action status.

Running the full length of the Tablets of the Missing above the names is the following inscription:

HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF AMERICANS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
AND WHO SLEEP IN UNKNOWN GRAVES.

The pylon or stele in front of the Tablets of the Missing is 69 feet high and triangular in plan. Faced in Roman travertine, it is surmounted by a sculptured figure in Baveno granite designed by Sidney Waugh of New York. The figure represents the spirit of peace hovering over the fallen, bearing olive branches. Flying beside her out of cloud-like forms is the American eagle, guardian of justice and honor. This sculpture as well as

the reliefs in the two atria were executed by Polli and Cardini of Baveno, Italy. The following dedicatory inscription appears on the pylon in English and Italian:

1941-1945

IN PROUD MEMORY OF HER SONS AND
IN HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICES
THIS MEMORIAL HAS BEEN ERECTED BY
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The memorial is protected from possible landslide damage by massive reinforced concrete walls on its sides and rear.

THE GRAVES AREA

The 4,398 headstones are separated by paths of grass into eight plots designated A to H, four on each side of the central or east-west mall.

Within the graves area, the headstones seem to radiate in gentle arcs from the memorial pylon, curving inward slightly, contributing to the harmonious relationship between the graves area and the memorial.

These honored Dead who gave their lives in our country's service came from the Philippine Islands, China, Turkey, Spain, the District of Columbia and every state in the Union except Alaska.

Two headstones mark the multiple burials of two Unknowns whose remains could not be separated and one headstone marks the grave of three Unknowns. Five pairs of brothers are buried side-by-side within the cemetery.

The statues honoring the memory of the fallen comrades of the 361st and 363rd Regiments of the 91st Division originally were located elsewhere in Italy. Because they were being defaced and thought worthy of retention, an agreement was made with the regiments to display them in perpetuity at the Florence American Cemetery.

PLANTINGS

The graves area is enclosed by tree and shrubbery masses in which Italian stone pines, Italian cypresses, oriental plane trees, willows, holly oaks and cedars of Lebanon predominate. There also flowering shrubs of oleander, laurel-cherry, crepe myrtle and Chinese starjasmine. A double row of oriental plane trees flank the mall.

On the north side of the cemetery is a road bordered with German iris which leads to the service area, the superintendent's quarters and the memorial and its parking area.